Post 1-4-69

Hoffa Aides Assail U.S. On Bugging

Jailed Teamsters leader James R. Hoffa yesterday accused the Government of using illegal bugging to convict him of mail fraud — and then concealing the extent of its activities from the Supreme Court.

Hoffa's attorneys described the Government's attitude as "cavalier" as they petitioned the court to hear their claim that the bugging voided his 1964 conviction.

The union president is in Federal prison at Lewisburg, Pa., for a separate jury tampering conviction. The court has not acted on a petition for a new trial filed for him last September.

The bugging dispute was set off by a Justice Department disclosure to the Supreme Court in April 1967 that FBI agents had eavesdropped on S. George Burris, a New York City accountant convicted with Hoffa.

The department said then that neither Hoffa nor any of five other co-defendants was subjected to bugging. The department also said the bugging did not contribute to Hoffa's conviction.

Hoffa's attorneys contend, however, that the Burris conversation tipped Government prosecutors to Hoffa's defense and that FBI Agent John C. Connors, who had been assigned to investigate union pension fund loans, tailored his testimony accordingly.

The Hoffa petition said the Government withheld the contents of the bugged conversation from the court in its disclosure.